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ABSTRACT

A survey of the status of language usage in Iraq begins with an overview of the usage patterns of Arabic and Kurdish, especially in the context of recent political events and the agreement to make Kurdish a second official language in the Kurdish autonomous region, and to allow limited use of Kurdish in instruction and public communication. A matrix follows that rates Arabic and Kurdish on: (1) their usage rating using State Department classifications; (2) increase and decrease trends by the year 2000; (3) chief of state use in addressing the populace; (4) use in armed forces, government, court, and diplomatic communications, written and oral; (5) use as a language of instruction or required language in higher education, on the secondary and elementary levels, and in adult education; (6) use in the popular press, radio and television broadcasting, and film; (7) business and professional use, written and oral; (8) use in intellectual circles; (9) the alphabet situation; (10) their status in literature; (11) use in public signs and notices; and (12) the availability of instructional materials and dictionaries for use by English speakers. Explanatory notes give the number and population percentages using the languages, the type of alphabets used and specific instructional material titles. A selected bibliography is also included. (MSE)

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Language/Area Reference Center

COUNTRY STATUS REPORT:

IRAQ

September, 1984

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
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Iraq - 1, Overview

The official language of Iraq is Arabic, spoken as a native language by 71% of the population, and pervading all phases of public, commercial and cultural life in Iraq. Kurdish, which is spoken as a native language by approximately 23% of the population, was recognized in the 1974 Provisional Constitution as the official language, alongside Arabic, in the Kurdish "autonomous region" a decision preceeded by four Kurdish wars, and followed by a fifth.

A central term to the agreement concluded between the Kurds and the Baghdad government in 1974 was a census to be taken in Iraqi Kurdistan to decisively establish the boundaries of the newly-declared "autonomous region." This region was then to be accorded full cultural and representational rights within the Iraqi state. Thus, all education would be in Kurdish; the Kurdish press, radio and television would be expanded and originate regionally; and the autonomous local government would operate completely in Kurdish, while communications with the central government would be in Arabic.

The census on which all this was to be based was not taken at that time, the fifth Kurdish war began, and the central government from 1975 through 1976 proceeded to implement a policy of arabization in the oil-rich and frontier Kurdish areas. The promised census was taken in 1976-77, and the "autonomous region" of Kurdistan was redefined excluding all the oil-rich areas and reduced to a fraction of its original size. In greater Kurdistan, schools began teaching via Arabic alone; many towns and villages were given Arabic names to replace the Kurdish ones. Kurds were deported to Arab Iraq or the much-shrunken "autonomous region", while Kurdish officials and teachers were replaced by Arabs loyal to the central government.

The end result of this policy was a Kurdish defeat, and the following amended promises: Kurdish is used as a language of instruction in primary and secondary schools only in a small portion of Iraqi Kurdistan (the new "autonomous region"). Radio and television time in Kurdish have been severely restricted and are controlled by and emitted from Baghdad. The one "Kurdish" newspaper--al-Iraq--is printed in Baghdad, in Arabic.

Amidst the restrictions, however, it is no small gain to Iraq's Kurds that the government has constitutionally recognized the rights of Kurdish nationality (admittedly over and above what Iran, Turkey and Syria have accorded their Kurdish populations). The Kurdish legislative and executive councils sit at Irbil, and while they are picked for their willingness to cooperate with the central government, the language of their proceedings is Kurdish. Additionally, what is of genuine value to the Iraqi Kurds is the establishment of the University of as-Sulaimaniyya, where originally the language of instruction was Kurdish, alongside Arabic. Although in the last few years, most of the Kurdish professors have been replaced by Arabs, and Kurdish is now only the language of instruction in the Department of Kurdish Language, the university remains the center of Kurdish intellectual life, and having been won by force, it is a source of great pride to Kurds.

It is of little doubt that the historic hostility between the Kurds and the central Arab government has contributed to the tenacious survival of Kurdish society, of which the Kurdish language is the most distinguishing and binding characteristic. It is unlikely that the cultural gains of the Iraqi Kurds--punctuated as they have been by five difficult wars--will be surrendered to cultural assimilation into Iraq's predominantly Arab society.

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Iraq - 2, Language Use Matrix

IRAQ

Languages

Factoids	Arabic	Kurdish
1. Usage rating*	1	2
2. Increase/decrease	2	2
3. Chief of State use?	1	0
4. Armed Forces/written	1	0
5. Armed Forces/oral	1	4
6. Government/written	2	2
7. Government/oral, national	1	0
8. Government/oral, local	1	3
9. Court/written	1	0
10. Court/oral	1	3
11. Diplomatic use?	1	0
12. Higher education	1	2
13. Higher ed: required?	1	1
14. Secondary education	1	1
15. Secondary: required?	1	1
16. Primary education	1	1
17. Primary: required?	1	1
18. Adult education	1	4
19. Popular press use	2	3
20. Transmission across borders?	0	1
21. Use in radio broadcasting	2	2
22. Use in TV broadcasting	2	2
23. Use in film	1	0
24. Business/professional/written	1	0
25. Business/professional/oral	1	3
26. Use in intellectual circles	1	2
27. Alphabet situation*	1	1
28. Status of literature	1	1
29. Use in signs?	1	1
30. Teaching materials*	2	2
31. Bilingual dictionaries*	2	2

Notes:

Numbers are explained on following pages

? = information unavailable within time frame of project

- = not applicable

* = footnotes on following pages

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Iraq - 3, Footnotes

1. 1984 ESTIMATES, NUMBER OF NATIVE SPEAKERS

Language	Number of native speakers	Percentage of Population
Arabic	10,295,000	71%
Kurdish	3,450,000	23%
	(2,175,000)	(15%)

Numbers in parentheses represent the Iraqi government estimate of the size of the Kurdish population, which differs considerably from other estimates. Figures generally range from 18% to 26%. Our choice of 23% was made on the suggestion of the outside validator.

27. TYPE OF ALPHABET USED

Language	Alphabet
Arabic	Arabic
Kurdish	Arabic

30. TEACHING MATERIALS FOR ENGLISH SPEAKERS

Language	Texts
Arabic (Modern Standard)	Abboud, Peter F. et al. Elementary Modern Standard Arabic, Parts I and II. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, Department of Near Eastern and North African Studies, 1975-76.
	Modern Standard Arabic, Intermediate Level: Parts I-III. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, Department of Near Eastern and North African Studies, 1972.
	Azmi, Sanaa and Belkacem Baccouche. Conversations in Modern Standard Arabic. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984.
Arabic (Iraqi Colloquial)	Erwin, Wallace M. A Basic Course in Iraqi Arabic. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1969.
	O'Leary, De Lacy. Colloquial Arabic. London, England: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971.
	Van Ess, John. The Spoken Arabic of Iraq. London, England: Oxford University Press, 1975.
	Van Wagoner, Merrill Y. Spoken Arabic (Iraqi). Ithaca, NY: Spoken Language Services, 1975.

30. TEACHING MATERIALS FOR THE ENGLISH SPEAKER (cont.)

Language	Texts
Kurdish	Abdulla, Jamal Jalal and Ernest N. McCarus. Kurdish Basic Course: Dialect of Sulaimania, Iraq. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1967.
	. Kurdish Readers. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1967, 3 volumes.
	Akrawy, F. R. Standard Kurdish Grammar. Aylsham, Norfolk, England: the author, 1982.

31. BILINGUAL DICTIONARIES FOR THE ENGLISH SPEAKER

Language	Texts
Arabic (Modern Standard)	al-Ba'albaki, Munir. Al-Mawrid. A Modern English-Arabic Dictionary, 16th ed. Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-'Ilm lil Mabayin, 1982.
	Doniach, Nakdimon S., (ed). The Oxford English-Arabic Dictionary of Current Usage. Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1978.
	Wehr, Hans. Arabic-English Dictionary. Edited by J. Milton Cowan. Ithaca, NY: Spoken Language Services, 1977.
	al-Karmi, Hasan S. Al-Manar, English-Arabic Dictionary. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1972.
Arabic (Iraqi Colloquial)	Clarity, Beverly E., Karl Stowasser and Ronald G. Wolfe (eds.). A Dictionary of Iraqi Arabic: English-Arabic. (Richard Slade Harrell Arabic Series, No. 6). Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1964.
	Woodhead, Daniel R. (ed.). A Dictionary of Iraqi Arabic: Arabic-English. (Richard Slade Harrell Arabic Series, No. 10). Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1967.

31. BILINGUAL DICTIONARIES FOR ENGLISH SPEAKERS (cont.)

Language	Texts
Kurdish	McCarus, Ernest N. A Kurdish-English Dictionary: Dialect of Sulaimania, Iraq. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1967.
	Wahby, Taufiq and C. J. Edmonds. A Kurdish-English Dictionary, 2nd ed. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1971.

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Iraq, A Tourist's Guide. Baghdad, Iraq: Tourist Office, 1975.

Jawad, Sa'ad. "Recent Developments in the Kurdish Issue," in Tim Niblock (ed.). Iraq: The Contemporary State. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1982.

Katz, Elihu and George Wedell. Broadcasting in The Third World. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978.

Lucas, Christopher. "Arab Illiteracy and the Mass Literacy Campaign in Iraq," Comparative Education Review, Vol. 25, No. 1, 1981, pp. 74-84.

Middle East and North Africa, 1983-84. London: Europa Publications Ltd., 1983.

Nyrop, Richard (ed.). Iraq, A Country Study. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1979.

Vanly, Ismet Sheriff. "Kurdistan in Iraq," in Gerard Chaliand (ed.). People without A Country: The Kurds in Kurdistan. London: Zed Press, 1980. (Translation of an earlier version published in 1978 in French.)

Venier, Bernard. l'Iraq d'Aujourd'hui. Paris: Maspero, 1963.

Whitley, Andrew. "The Kurds: Pressures and Prospects," The Round Table, No. 279, July, 1980.

World Communications. Paris: UNESCO Press, 1975.

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Explanation of Matrix Figures - a

1. Usage rating, using the State Department classifications
   1: Official language, most widely used.
   2: Official language, not most widely used.
   3: Widely used language, but not official. (Over 10% of population)
   4: Unofficial language used by significant minority (but less than 3)
   5: Unofficial language used by influential minority
   FOOTNOTE: NUMBERS OF SPEAKERS, PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION

2. Increase/decrease trends by the year 2000
   1: Number of native speakers will increase in proportion
   2: Number of native speakers will remain proportionally constant
   3: Number of native speakers will decrease in proportion

3. Chief of State use, in addressing populace: YES (1) NO (0)

4. Armed Forces written communications
   1: Only language used in official communiques
   2: One of the languages used in official communiques
   0: Not used in official communiques

5. Armed Forces oral communications
   1: Used on all levels
   2: Used among officers only
   3: Used among multi-lingual NCO's and troops
   4: Used among monolingual troops only
   0: Not used

6. Written government communications
   1: Only language used in official communications
   2: One of the languages used in official communications
   0: Not used in official communications

7. Oral government communications/national level
   1: Official language spoken in national assembly
   2: One of the official languages spoken in national assembly
   0: Not used in government

8. Oral government communications/local level
   1: Official language in local government
   2: One of the official languages used in local government
   3: Allowed in local government proceedings, translated into official language
   0: Not used in local government

9. Court use in written communications
   1: Only language used in official communications
   2: One of the languages used in official communications
   0: Not used

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Explanation of Matrix Figures - b

10. Court use in oral communications
    1: Only official language used in court
    2: One of the official languages used in court
    3: Allowed in courts, translated into official language(s)
    0: Not used in courts

11. Diplomatic use in notes to other countries: YES (1) NO (0)

12. Use in higher education
    1: Official medium of instruction
    2: Unofficial medium of instruction
    0: Not used

13. Language taught as subject in required courses in higher education:
    YES (1) NO (0)

14. Use in secondary education
    1: Official medium of instruction
    2: Unofficial medium of instruction
    0: Not used as medium of instruction

15. Language taught as subject in required courses on secondary level?
    YES (1) NO (0)

16. Use in primary education
    1: Official medium of instruction
    2: Unofficial medium of instruction
    0: Not used as medium of instruction

17. Language taught as subject in required courses on primary level?
    YES (1) NO (0)

18. Language use in adult education
    1: Used in oral and written technical instruction
    2: Used in oral and written life skills instruction
    3: Used in oral life skills instruction
    4: Used in literacy classes only
    0: Not used in adult informal education

19. Language use in popular press
    1: Used in publications throughout country
    2: Used in centrally-based publications with national distribution
    3: Used only in regional and local publications
    4: Used in clandestine publications only
    0: Not used

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Explanation of Matrix Figures - c

20. Language used in radio/TV transmission across national borders?
YES (1) NO (0)

21. Language use in radio broadcasting
1: Language used broadcasting thoughout country
2: Language used in centrally-based national broadcasts
3: Language used in local broadcasting only
3: Language used in clandestine broadcasting only
0: Language not used in radio broadcasting

22. Language use in TV broadcasting
1: Language used in telecasting throughout country
2: Language used in centrally-based national telecasting
3: Language used regional and local telecasting only
0: Language not used in TV

23. Language use in film
1: Language used in indigenous film-making
2: Foreign-language films dubbed/subtitled into language
0: Language not used in films

24. Business/Professional use - written
1: Sole official language in business and professional communications
2: One of the official languages in business and professional communication
0: Not used

25. Business/Professional use - oral
1: Used in trade and commerce throughout country
2: Used in national trade and commerce only
3: Used only in local trade and commerce

26. Language use in intellectual circles
1: Language used in indigenous scholarly publications
2: Language used in formal scholarly discussion
0: Language not used

27. Alphabet situation
1: Established standardized alphabet exists.
2: Alphabet developed, no standardization
3: Competing alphabets exist
0: No alphabet exists
FOOTNOTE: TYPE OF ALPHABET USED

28. Status of indigenous literature
1: Established written tradition exists
2: Literature tradition emerging
3: Popular literature exists
0: No written literature exists

29. Language used in official public signs, notices: YES (1) NO (0)

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Explanation of Matrix Figures - d

30. Teaching materials for English speakers
    1: Wide range of teaching materials exists
    2: Narrow range of teaching materials exists
    0: No teaching materials exist
    FOOTNOTE: SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

31. Dictionaries for English speakers
    1: Wide range of bilingual dictionaries exists
    2: Narrow range of dictionaries exists
    0: No dictionaries exist
    FOOTNOTE: SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY